

Wetland Buffer Plantings

Wetland buffer zones are vegetated areas that are left in a natural condition to help protect wetland functions and values. Wetland buffer zones reduce the effects of human disturbance on wetland. As part of the application process DEM may require buffer plantings near the limits of work in wetlands. Buffer plantings reduce noise and visual disturbances to the nearby wetland and provide food for wildlife (especially if they are berry producing shrubs/trees). The following trees and shrubs are ones that DEM commonly permits as buffer plants.

TREES:

- Eastern arborvitae, Thuja occidentalis
- American mountain ash, Sorbus americana
- White pine, Pinus strobus
- American holly, Ilex opaca
- Red maple, Acer rubrum
- Weeping willow, Salix babylonica
- Silver maple, Acer saccharinum
- Spruce, Picea spp.
- Tupelo, Nyssa sylvatica
- Eastern red cedar, Juniperus virginiana
- Hawthorn, Crataegus spp.
- White Ash, Fraxinus americana
- Oaks, Quercus spp.
- Gray Birch, Betula populifolia

SHRUBS:

- Mountain laurel, Kalmia latifolia
- Highbush blueberry, Vaccinium corymbosum
- Silky dogwood, Cornus amomum
- Giant rhododendron, Rhododendron maximum
- Flowering dogwood, Cornus florida
- Spice bush, Lindera benzoin
- Red osier dogwood, Cornus sericea
- Bayberry, Myrica pensylvanica
- Gray dogwood, Cornus racemosa
- Rugosa rose, Rosa rugosa

- Purple osier willow, Salix purpurea
- Sweet pepperbush, Clethra alnifolia
- Northern arrowwood, Viburnum dentatum
- Swamp azalea, Rhododendron viscosum
- Wild raisin, Viburnum cassinoides
- Pussy willow, Salix discolor
- American cranberry bush, Viburnum trilobum
- Alder, Alnus spp.
- Winterberry, Ilex verticillata
- Common witch hazel, Hamamelis virginiana
- Inkberry, Ilex glabra
- Common elderberry, Sambucus canadensis

GROUND COVER:

- Wildlife conservation grass mix for a permanent cover of grasses and wildflowers

This plant list is a guide only and by no means all-inclusive. The physical site conditions and the growth condition of the plants will dictate which species are appropriate for your property: sun or shade; soil type, moist or dry conditions, etc. You should also consider the physical characteristics of the plant when making your selections. Native plants are more acclimated to local conditions and require less maintenance. DEM will want to know not only the plant names, but also the height and the distance between the trees and shrubs. DEM commonly permits buffer plantings along the 'limit of disturbance' in a backyard, as well as along both sides of a wetlands crossing. Two to three rows of plantings provide more buffering effect than a single row, however, a single row is preferable if additional rows involve an increase in clearing and alteration. If a regulated area on your property was previously disturbed or developed you may want to restore the area with buffer plantings.

DEM finds the following references helpful:

American Wildlife & Plants a Guide to Wildlife Food Habits by Alexander Martin, Herbert Zim and Arnold Nelson. 1961. Dover Publications, Inc., NY

Native Shrubs for Landscaping by Sally Taylor, Glenn Dreyer and William Niering. Third printing 1992. The Connecticut College Arboretum Bulletin No. 30. New London, CT

Sustainable Trees and Shrubs, 3rd Edition, by Brian Maynard, Richard Cassagrande, Marion Gold, Sayles Livingston and Susan Gordon (eds.). 1999. URI Cooperative Extension, Kingston, RI

Trees, Shrubs and Vines for Attracting Birds by Richard DeGraff and Gretchin Witman. 1979. University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA

Wetland Planting Guide for the Northeastern United States: Plants for Wetland Creation, Restoration, and Enhancement by Gwendolyn Thunhorst. 1993. Environmental Concern, Inc., St. Michaels, MD

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